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PROPERTY
HAROLD
MONRO**

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REAL PROPERTY

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REAL PROPERTY

By HAROLD MONRO

LONDON: THE POETRY BOOKSHOP
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Some Books by the same Author

VERSE

JUDAS : A Poem (1908)

BEFORE DAWN (1911). *Out of Print*

CHILDREN OF LOVE (1914). *Fourth Thousand*

STRANGE MEETINGS (1917). *Third Thousand*

PROSE

THE CHRONICLE OF A PILGRIMAGE: Paris to Milan
on Foot (1909)

SOME CONTEMPORARY POETS (1920)

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All the poems contained in this volume, except two, have appeared in various Magazines and Periodicals. Six of them have already been printed in Anthologies.

PRAYER TO MEMORY

Why have you veiled your eyes ?
Why are you dumbed by the power of
your own thought ?

You know all, know all.
Yet a man may toil through his life
Unavailingly, unfruitfully trying
To gather one hint from your lips.

O give me a token !
I do not believe in the braggart
Who boasts of vague beauty remembered,
But never has looked upon You.

When a man has abandoned thought
And returned to his daily labour,
Then you uncover your eyes,
And your thrilling voice
Will ring through the meadows of time.

" Memory spoke to me, spoke to me,"
A man will cry as from sleep ;
But, before he can capture their sound,
Your words will have drifted away, away.

He may know indeed the ring of your voice,
But no clue will remain in his mind.

Memory, mother of thought,
Help me !
I am a child of the past ;
Heir to the future : you hold
Both of these in your brain.

You can look forward and backward :
You can combine
Future and past into one,
So that you govern the world.

I implore :
May your words
Ring more clearly, more clearly,
Ring through my heart and my brain,
That I rejoice in the Earth.

PART I

*Dedicated to any careful
and thoughtful Reader,
whose mind may move in
harmony with my own.*

About six years ago I discovered that certain poems I was then writing, or carrying, unwritten, in my mind, fell naturally together into a group or sequence, for which the title that presented itself to me was "Real Property."

Having become conscious of this, I drew up the scheme for a sequence ; but the imagination preferred to remain independent, and most of the poems, thus artificially planned, remained unwritten.

The fragments of my sequence now, after much hesitation, are published in the First Part of this book. Anybody, who may so desire, will be able easily to recognise both the relation of the different poems each to each, and the central idea which holds them all loosely together.

THE SILENT POOL

I

I HAVE discovered finally to-day
This house that I have called my own
Is built of straw and clay,
Not, as I thought, of stone.

I wonder who the architect could be,
What builder made it of that stuff ;
When it was left to me
The house seemed good enough.

Yet, slowly, as its roof began to sink,
And as its walls began to split,
And I began to think,
Then I suspected it ;

But did not clearly know until to-day
That it was only built of straw and clay.

II

NOW I will go about on my affairs
As though I had no cares,
Nor ever think at all
How one day soon that house is bound to fall,
So when I'm told the wind has blown it down
I may have something else to call my own.

I have enquired who was the architect,
What builder did erect.
I'm told they did design
Million and million others all like mine,
And argument with all men ends the same :—
It is impossible to fix the blame.

I am so glad that underneath our talk
Our minds together walk.
We argue all the while,
But down below our argument we smile.
We have our houses, but we understand
That our real property is common land.

III

AT night we often go
With happy comrades to that real estate,
Where dreams in beauty grow,
And every man enjoys a common fate.

At night in sleep one flows
Below the surface of all argument ;
The brain, with all it knows,
Is covered by the waters of content.

But when the dawn appears
Brain rises to the surface with a start,
And, waking, quickly sneers
At the old natural brightness of the heart.

Oh, that a man might choose
To live unconsciously like beast or bird,
And our clear thought not loose
Its beauty when we turn it into word.

IV

THOSE quarrelings between my brain and heart
(In which I'd take no part)
Pursue their violent course
Corrupting my most vital force
So that my natural property is spent
In fees to keep alive their argument.

V

LOOK downward in the silent pool :
The weeds cling to the ground they love ;
They live so quietly, are so cool ;
They do not need to think, or move.

Look down in the unconscious mind :
There everything is quiet too
And deep and cool, and you will find
Calm growth and nothing hard to do,
And nothing that need trouble you.

ONE MOMENT ONLY

WHAT river do we walk beside,
So red and strong and throbbing like a heart ?—
O Brain, now you and I
Are dreaming of the river of all Blood.

Dive from this bank, and I will follow ;
And we will swim against the current up.
Plunge ! Ah, do not awaken :
Loud the blood flows. Strike upward to the source.

Hold me !—You must not tire ;
For you and I will talk of this, years after ;
We shall remember it for ever.
I am so happy now.

* * * *

You're failing, failing. We shall drown.
Where are you ? I have lost you in the dark.
Oh, the thick blood is roaring through my body.
Into what world have I awakened now ?
Brain, could you not have dreamed a little longer ?

EARTHLINESS

HOW can I tell,
I who now live,
What I have been in the past before I was born ?

Memory cries,
Heart can repeat
Echo of echo from cave after cave of my life.

I can imagine,
Stretching my thought
Backward and backward, my fathers, their fathers, and theirs,

And the one long
Faithful desire
Driving through ages to me who am breathing and here.

But as I burrow
Deep into Mind,
Only the dark passage widens : I can't feel the walls.

Oh, there must be,
Somewhere beyond,
Through all that darkness, a light, for there's often a sound,

That roars in my ears
Like waves on the rocks
Of an ocean I've known, and when I remember that life

Then in my body,
Or in my heart,
Or in my brain, some quarrel, or hunger or love,

Cruel, too great
To be hidden, too eager,
Too wild for the tame life we live, will arise and cry ;

Suddenly shriek,
As one who has been
Buried alive, awak'ning, might shriek in the earth :

Calling and calling,
Shaking my body,
Till I unbury the dead and discover the past.

* * * *

Soul, oh my soul,
Here is your master,
God and begetter, yes, hundred-fold father. He lives

Deep in your flesh,
Soul of my body, O soul :
You must be faithful to him. He is God unto you.

If he is wild
Is he not you ?
If he is wanton, not you ? If rebellious, not you ?

In the young world,
Out of the sea,
Slowly he crept with you, feeling his way to the sun ;

And in the light,
High on the beach,
Laid down your body, and moulded the shape of you, Soul ;

All that long time,
Low in your ear,
Whispered the spells of the earth, which you heard not at first.

Slowly, the slow,
Slowly and slowly, the sound,
Sound of his whispering moulded your ear to his voice.

* * * *

Lift up your head
Over the hills :
The distance is filled with the image and shadow of him ;

Of him, and of him,
Like a forest, an ocean,
A mountain, a world.

But who is it speaks in me now ?

Who is it speaks ?
Is it my brain ?
Who was it talking within me and to me at once ?

Silence replies,
And no one can tell
The voice from the silence, or knows when the Voice shall begin.

UNDERWORLD

THE vaults down in the underworld are not so dumb as they would seem

To us who walk above them with our feet upon their roofs.

For the shapeless is for ever groping back to form : the dead make sounds

Like pebbles falling in a pool, or roots that hope to reach the water,

Stretching out, and writhing out, and moaning out.

There is no end among the corridors below : they wind about the world ;

And shadows flow along them and are whispering throughout them.

Or slowly from the far-away a rumour will come floating
(Through cavern after cavern) of a dark tumultuous struggle :
Spirits forming from the shapeless, called by Time and taking journey.

Eyes are sealed, and voices wordless : they have just begun to wonder

What Body means, where Light can be : their nerves are feeling forward.

They are groping at their roof :

How they strive to force their hands up,

Crawling over mounds of skulls

To the tender thrilling surface.

There are shadows there of shadows. There are images and
spectres
That make shadows on the high earth : ghosts invisible to eyes
Too accustomed to the daylight. But by looking inward, back-
ward
In the pool of mind, and leaning
To that place of inward shadows,
Where the world is like a spectre,
You can feel among the turnings and the spaces of the under-
world,
And help the groping spirits in to thought. Now they will
wonder :—
“ What was that ? What are those feet I hear ?
Who moves above my head ? Why is that distant earth so white
and clear,
And filled with strong vibration ? I will learn to make a body,
And to move myself about.”
You can lead their ghostly movings.
They will waken into form. They will make a world about them.
They will walk if you desire them.

FATE

I

I HAVE so often
Examined all this well-known room
That I inhabit.

There is the open window ;
There the locked door, the door I cannot open,
The only doorway.

When at the keyhole often, often
I bend and listen, I can always hear
A muffled conversation.

An argument :
An angry endless argument of people
Who live behind ;

Some loudly talking,
Some dimly into separate conflict moving,
Behind the door.

There they seem prisoned,
As I, in this lone room that I inhabit :
My life ; my body.

You, of the previous Being,
You who once made me, and who now discuss me,
Tell me your edict.

You, long ago,
With doubting hands and eager trembling fingers,
Prepared my room.

Before I came,
Each gave a token for remembrance, left it,
And then retired behind the bolted door.

There is the pot of honey
One brought, and there the jar of vinegar
On the same table.

Who poured that water
Shining beside the flask of yellow wine ?
Who sighed so softly ?

Who brought that living flower to the room ?
Who groaned—and I can ever hear the echo ?
—You do not answer.

Meanwhile from out the distance
Sounds reach me as of building other houses :
Men building houses.

And if they ever
Should open up a doorway in the wall,
And I pass onward,

What should I take them
Beyond those doorways, in the other rooms ?
What shall I bring them,
That they may love me ?

Fatal question !
For all the jangling voices rise together :
“ What should he take them ? ”

“ What shall he take them ? ” . . .
Through that locked door there is no final answer.
They are debating, endlessly debating . . .

II

O FATE ! Have you no other gift
Than voices in a muffled room ?
Why do you live behind a door,
And hide yourself in gloom ?

And why, again, should you not have
One purpose only, one sole word,
Ringing for ever round my heart :
Plainly delivered, plainly heard ?

Your conversation fills my brain
And tortures all my life, and yet
Gives nothing, and I often think
You've grown so old, that you forget ;

And having learnt man's fatal trick
Of talking, talking, talking still,
You're tired of definite design,
And laugh at having lost your Will.

GRAVITY

I

FIT for perpetual worship is the power
That holds our bodies safely to the earth.

When people talk of their domestic gods,
Then privately I think of You.

We ride through space upon your shoulders
Conveniently and lightly set,
And, so accustomed, we relax our hold,
Forget the gentle motion of your body—
But You do not forget.

Sometimes you breathe a little faster,
Or move a muscle :
Then we remember you, O Master.

II

WHILE people meet in reverent groups
And sing to their domestic God,
You, all that time, dear tyrant (How I laugh !)
Could, without effort, place your hand among them,
And sprinkle them.

But all your ways are carefully ordered,
For you have never questioned duty.
We watch your everlasting combinations ;
We call them fate ; we turn them to our pleasure,
And when they most delight us, call them beauty.

III

I REST my body on your grass,
And let my brain repose in you :
I feel these living moments pass,
And, from within myself to those far places
To be imagined in your time and spaces,
Deliberate the various acts you do :—

Sorting and re-arranging worlds of Matter
Keenly and wisely. Thus you brought our earth
Through stages, and from purpose back to purpose ;
From fire to fog, to dust, to birth
Through beast to man, who led himself to brain—
(And you will draw him back to dust again.)

By leave of you he places stone on stone ;
He scatters seed : you are at once the prop
Among the long roots of his fragile crop.
You manufacture for him, and insure
House, harvest, implement and furniture,
And hold them all secure.

IV

THE hill . . . The trees . . . From underneath
I feel You pull me with your hand :
Through my firm feet up to my heart
You hold me,—You are in the land,
Reposing underneath the hill.

You keep my balance and my growth.
I lift a foot, but where I go
You follow : you, the ever-strong,
Control the smallest thing I do.

If by some little human power
I turn your purpose to my end,
For that I thank you every hour.
I stand at worship, while you send
Thrills up my body to my heart,
And I am all in love to know
How by your strength you keep me part
Of earth, which cannot let me go ;
How everything I see around,
Whether it can or cannot move,
Is granted liberty of ground,
And freedom to enjoy your love ;

Though you are silent always, and, alone
To You yourself, your power remains unknown.

THE GARDEN

HE told me he had seen a ruined garden
Outside the town.

"Where? Where?"

I asked him quickly.

He said it lay toward the southern country ;

He knew the road well : he would take me there.

Then he sat down and talked

About that garden.

He was so grandly proud and sure of it,

I listened all the evening to his talk.

And our glasses were emptied,

Talking of it.

We filled them and filled them again,

Talking of it.

He said that no one knew

The garden but himself ;

Though hundreds passed it day by day,

Yet no one knew it but himself.

I

THE garden, it was long and wide
And filled with great unconscious peace ;
All the old trees were tall and large,
And all the birds—

The birds, he said, were like a choir
Of lively boys,
Who never went to school,
But sang instead.

He told me of the trailing flowers
Hung on the ruined walls ;
The rivers and their waterfalls ;
The hidden woods ; the lawns ; the bowers.

Small cool plantations ; palm and vine,
With fig-tree growing by their side,
And violet and maidenhair
And

II

we were late in conversation
Talking of that most wonderful garden,
And filled our glasses again and again
Talking about that beautiful garden,

Until he vowed in the middle of drink
To lead me to-morrow to see it myself.
We closed our hands on the pact.
He vanished away through the dark.

III

TO-MORROW, to-morrow, we start our walk.
To-morrow is here and he meets me surely.
Out from the city we go and pursue
Mile after mile of the open road ;

Come to a place of sudden trees,
Pass it across the fields, then on
By farmyards, through villages, over the downs :

Mile after mile we walk. He is pleased.
Our feet become heavy with dust, and we laugh,
And we talk all the while of our future delight.

IV

HE came upon the garden in the dusk ;
He leaned against the wall :
He pointed out its beauties in the gloom.
We lay down weary in the shadow of elms,
And stared between their branches at the moon,
And talked about to-morrow and the garden.
I knew that everything he said was true,
For we were resting up against the wall.

V

OH hard awakening from a dream :
I thought I was in paradise.
He cooked the coffee we had brought,
Then looked about him.

We had not reached the wall, he found.
It was a little farther on.
We walked another mile or two,
And stood before the ruined gate.

He was not satisfied at all.
He said the entrance was not here.
I hardly understood his talk,
And so I watched him move about.
Indeed, it was the garden he had meant ;
But not the one he had described.

VI

THEN suddenly from out his conversation
I saw it in the light of his own thought :
A phantom Eden shining
Placid among his dreams.

And he, with large eyes and with hands uplifted,
Cried : “ Look, O look ! ” Indeed I saw the garden ;
The ghostly palm and violet,
Fig, maidenhair, and fountain ;

The rivers and their flowered lawns ; the gleaming
Birds ; and their song—I heard that clear I know.
And silent, in amazement,
We stared

Then both sat down beneath the wall and rested,
And in our conversation
Lived in the garden.

VII

“W E’LL come again next week,” he said at last.
“We have no leisure to explore it now ;
Besides we cannot climb this crumbling wall :
Our gate is on the farther side, I know.
We’d have to go right round, and even then
I am not sure it’s open till the spring.
I have affairs in town. If you don’t mind,
We will go back directly. After all,
The garden cannot run away, or change.
Next week I’ll have more time, and, once inside,
Who knows . . . Who knows ? How very curious too,
Hundreds of people pass it day by day
Along that high road over there ; the cars—
Look at them ! And the railway too ! Well. Well,
I’m glad that no one cares for Eden now.
It would be spoilt so quickly. We’ll go back
By train, if you don’t mind. I’ve walked enough.
Look, there’s the station. Eh ? ”

VIII

I DID not see that man again
Until a year had gone or more.
I had not found him anywhere,
And many times had gone to seek
The garden, but it was not there.

One day along the country road
There was he coming all alone.
He would have passed me with a stare.
I held his arm, but he was cold,
And rudely asked me my affair.
I said, there was a garden, I'd been told . . .

IX

THEN suddenly came that rapture upon us ;
We saw the garden again in our mutual thought :
Blue and yellow and green,
Shining by day or by night.

“ Those are the trees,” he said, “ and there is the gateway.
To-day, I think, it is open. And shall we not go there ? ”
Quickly we ran in our joy ;
Quickly—then stopped, and stared.

X

AN angel with a flaming sword
Stood large, and beautiful, and clear :
He covered up his golden eyes,
And would not look as we came near.

Birds wheeled about the flowery gate,
But we could never see inside,
Although (I often think) it stood
Slack on its hinges open wide.

The angel dropped his hopeless sword,
And stood with his great pinions furled,
And wept into his hands : but we
Feared, and turned back to our own world.

SPRING

I

A SHADOW by the cottage door.
Not you to-day. You have taken wings :—
Out of the burning bush a bird
Has found you : to his mate he sings.
The battlements of paradise
Are taken at a single note.
Two pirouetting butterflies
Fall from the sky :
You change ; you float,
In their love-chase, a butterfly.
Where they have circled, quivering wheels
Of yellow, for a moment, light
The track of your impetuous flight. . . .
O now what tenement will suit
Your choice ?
Will you be thistledown,
And, in the currents of the wind,
Swim all about the air,
Then dive and find
A chink in earth and warmly nestle there ?
Or will you lower
Your voice,
And join the honey-laden undertone,
Murmuring a moment in a flower,
Then zuzzing to another and another ?

Or cast all wings
And burrow in the ground
Where blind and glossy creeping coiling things
Love without sound
Among the roots ? . . .

II

I WAIT. The undulating trill
Breaks in a tournament of song.
The rut, in every changing thrill,
Grips and becomes more strong,
As, with a breath, or by a kiss,
It makes the microcosm stir,
Warm under shell or chrysalis,
Dissolves the bud, designs the wing,
Adorns the body in its fur,
And passes into everything
From underground, and up the trees,
And over them and far away,
Through clouds among the flying storms
That gather in their separate forms,
Bend down upon their shining knees,
Festoon their rainbows on the brow
Of Earth, and garland it in spray.

I follow. You have vanished now
Down slimy rocks among the seas.

The darting fish remembers too,
And pranks a gaudy fin to please ;
Flashes him forth to fight a place
Among the ancients of the race.

You know the sound of clanking scales.
Your memory begins to creep
Through the cold blood of dreamy-eyed
Old monsters, rising from their sleep.
It is your pilgrimage to fill
The world in all its tracks and trails.

I follow you along the river-side,
Out to the meadowland and up the hill,
Among your flowers, back into your wood,
Where first we stood . . .
What can you show me more ?
Under your wings I stare. . . . And is there still
A shadow by the cottage door ?

III

WHERE you have built your wandering paradise
We always follow you.
That single moment that you give
Blossoms in endless tracks on sea and shore,
The current of desire to live,
The lust to grip a single moment more.
We can but follow you,
And when you bargain we must pay the price.

Then, homely, at the last you lead us round
Into the place where we have been before,
By different ways along familiar ground,
Into the shadow of a cottage door.

INTROSPECTION

THAT house across the road is full of ghosts ;
The windows, all inquisitive, look inward :
All are shut.
I've never seen a body in the house ;
Have you ? Have you ?
Yet feet go sounding in the corridors,
And up and down, and up and down the stairs,
All day, all night, all day.

When will the show begin ?
When will the host be in ?
What is the preparation for ?
When will he open the bolted door ?
When will the minutes move smoothly along in their hours ?
Time, answer !

The air must be hot : how hot inside.
If only somebody could go
And snap the windows open wide,
And keep them so !

All the back rooms are very large, and there
(So it is said)
They sit before their open books and stare ;
Or one will rise and sadly shake his head ;
Another will but comb and comb her hair,
While some will move untiringly about
Through all the rooms, for ever in and out,
Or up and down the stair ;

Or gaze into the small back-garden
And talk about the rain,
Then drift back from the window to the table,
Folding long hands, to sit and think again.

They do never meet like homely people
Round a fireside
After daily work . . .
Always busy with procrastination,
Backward and forward they move in the house,
Full of their questions
No one can answer.
Nothing will happen. . . . Nothing will happen . . .

REAL PROPERTY

TELL me about that harvest field.

Oh ! Fifty acres of living bread.
The colour has painted itself in my heart.
The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere ;
See it whenever I look round ;
Hear it growing through every sound,
Know exactly the sound it makes—
Remembering, as one must all day,
Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,
Limes all full of the mumbling bee :
So there must be a harvest field
Whenever one thinks of a linden tree.

A hedge is about it, very tall,
Hazy and cool, and breathing sweet.
Round paradise is such a wall
And all the day, in such a way,
In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes
And go within your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise :

I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown :
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own :
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day. . . .

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

OUTSIDE EDEN

Adam

HOW glad I am to think that our idle life is finished for ever.
I forbid you to loiter round the Gate. There is work for
you, my woman.

I always wanted to be an honest respectable man.

And I hated dawdling about under the trees all day

Nibbling bananas and sucking grapes. Look at that cave in the
hill.

That is our future home, and you must learn to cook.

The world is a different place. The sooner you know it the
better.

Eve

Eden ! Eden ! How the sun

Is glittering on the garden still.

Adam ! Adam ! You are changed.

Oh the black cave, the sullen hill.

Adam

The cave is for you, for me the hill. Be sure you remember that.
Here in the World the beasts of the World devour and are
devoured.

Here you will have no more silky lions, tame leopards and
hornless bulls.

This is my club, this tree ; and you must hide in that cave.
I shall go hunt for your meat : you will find it much wiser food
Than apples.

Eve

O my lord, you're changed.
I wish I had not learnt to sin.
Morning and night I'll pray and pray :
Perhaps at last He'll let us in.

Adam

Shame ! Shame ! You are thinking once more of your peacocks
and swans and goldfish.
You're only an idle woman ; no wife for an honest man.
If ever you try to return I'll pray to God that He kill you.
Is not our cave a good enough home ? I have longed for it all
my life.
Here we can plan the world : a useful world for our sons.

Eve

And was not Eden useful too ?
Did God not plan it for his men ?
How short our time was in that land.
We are not happy now as then.

Adam

Well. Well. Just settle down. I'll be as kind as I can.
You're only a woman after all. You need my protection. Don't
cry.
Everyone sooner or later must learn to know the World.
Eden was only a holiday. Now there is life, great Life.
You try to kindle a fire, while I must go down to the river.
Work is the future law ; Work to keep one alive ;
Work to forget one's life with . . .

Eve

Work is the only law !
Dreadful law and sad.
To work, to work will be good :
To idle will be bad.

So our children will learn
The ways of evil and good.
The Evil shall have no meat :
The Righteous shall have their
food.

PART II

*Dedicated to the
Zoo and its Owner.*

The Second Part of this Book contains chiefly fugitive poems written at various periods during the past ten years. Their subjects are natural ; they have no metaphysical background, nor, as those in the First Part, do they form a group.

Some of them are tainted with slight *Georgian* affectations, which no amount of polishing could successfully remove.

FROM AN OLD HOUSE

I

IN lonely silence
Of windless country
I think of those
In far London
Who move in lamplight.

Hark !—the shuffle
Of groping feet.
No—the branches
Keen at the window.

II

I heard the latch :
You have gone perhaps
To buy food in the town.

It must have been that,
By the way the old house
Becomes suddenly quiet
Like a dog awaiting
Its absent master.

III

Look ! Look !
Those are the fields
Of Paradise. . . .

—What can you mean ?
That is the pasture,
The pond, the cattle,
(Grazing by moonlight),
Of my old tenant,
Mister Brown.

IV

The moonlight, it was blowing in waves
To-night when I crossed the fields :
I waited below by the hedge.

My breath was caught up by the wind ;
I stood and expected to drown.

Curling across the green,
It folded me up :
I swam to the land,
Came back to the house,
In the shelter of trees,
To the safety of you.

DOG

O LITTLE friend, your nose is ready ; you sniff,
Asking for that expected walk,
(Your nostrils full of the happy rabbit-whiff)
And almost talk.

And so the moment becomes a moving force ;
Coats glide down from their pegs in the humble dark ;
You scamper the stairs,
Your body informed with the scent and the track and the mark
Of stoats and weasels, moles and badgers and hares.

We are going *Out*. You know the pitch of the word,
Probing the tone of thought as it comes through fog
And reaches by devious means (half-smelt, half-heard)
The four-legged brain of a walk-ecstatic dog.

Out through the garden your head is already low.
You are going your walk, you know,
And your limbs will draw
Joy from the earth through the touch of your padded paw.

Now, sending a little look to us behind,
Who follow slowly the track of your lovely play,
You fetch our bodies forward away from mind
Into the light and fun of your useless day.

* * * *

Thus, for your walk, we took ourselves, and went
Out by the hedge, and tree, to the open ground.
You ran, in delightful strata of wafted scent,
Over the hill without seeing the view ;
Beauty is hinted through primitive smells to you :
And that ultimate Beauty you track is but rarely found.

* * * *

Home . . . and further joy will be waiting there :
Supper full of the lovely taste of bone.
You lift up your nose again, and sniff, and stare
For the rapture known
Of the quick wild gorge of food, then the still lie-down ;
While your people will talk above you in the light
Of candles, and your dreams will merge and drown
Into the bed-delicious hours of night.

GOLDFISH

THEY are the angels of that watery world.
All innocent, they no more than aspire
To move themselves about on golden fins.
Or they can fill their paradise with fire
By darting suddenly from end to end.

Their eyes stare out from far away behind,
And cannot pierce the barrier of Mind.
In the same house are they and we ;
Yet well might be
Divided by a whole Eternity.

When twilight flows across the evening room
And air becomes like water, you can feel
Their movements growing larger in the gloom,
And merging with the room, and you are brought
Back where they live, the other side of thought.

Then in the morning, when the seven rays
Of London sunlight one by one incline,
They glide to meet them, and their gulping lips
Suck the light in, so they are caught and played
Like salmon on a heavenly fishing line.

THISTLEDOWN

THIS might have been a place for sleep
But, as from that small hollow there
Hosts of bright thistledown begin
Their dazzling journey through the air,
An idle man can only stare.

They grip their withered edge of stalk
In brief excitement for the wind ;
They hold a breathless final talk,
And when their filmy cables part
One almost hears a little cry.

Some cling together while they wait
And droop and gaze and hesitate,
But others leap along the sky,
Or circle round and calmly choose
The gust they know they ought to use.

While some in loving pairs will glide,
Or watch the others as they pass,
Or rest on flowers in the grass,
Or circle through the shining day
Like silvery butterflies at play.

Some catch themselves to every mound,
Then lingeringly and slowly move
As if they knew the precious ground
Were opening for their fertile love :
They almost try to dig, they need
So much to plant their thistle-seed.

THE NIGHTINGALE NEAR THE HOUSE

HERE is the soundless cypress on the lawn :
It listens, listens. Taller trees beyond
Listen. The moon at the unruffled pond
Stares. And you sing, you sing.

That star-enchanted song falls through the air
From lawn to lawn down terraces of sound,
Darts in white arrows on the shadowed ground ;
While all the night you sing.

My dreams are flowers to which you are a bee,
As all night long I listen, and my brain
Receives your song, then loses it again
In moonlight on the lawn.

Now is your voice a marble high and white,
Then like a mist on fields of paradise ;
Now is a raging fire, then is like ice,
Then breaks, and it is dawn.

CITY-STORM

THE heavy sounds are over-sweet
That droop above the hooded street,
At any moment ripe to fall and lie,
And when that Wind will swagger up the town
They'll bend a moment, then will fly
All clattering down.

Troupes come and go of urchin breeze ;
They flick your face or smack the trees,
Then round the corner spin and leap
With whistling cries,
Rake their rubbish in a heap
And throw it in your eyes.

(Much preparation of the earth and air
Is needed everywhere
Before that first large drop of rain can fall.)

Smells of the Sea, or inland Grass,
Come staring through the town and pass.
Brilliant old Memories drive in state
Along the way, but cannot wait ;
And many a large unusual bird
Hovers across the sky half-heard.

But listen. It is He ;
At last he comes :
Gigantic tyrant panting through the street,
Slamming the windows of our little homes,
Banging the doors, knocking the chimneys down.
Oh, his loud tramp : how scornfully he can meet
Great citizens, and lash them with his sleet !
Everything will be altered in our town.

He'll wipe the film of habit clean away.
While he remains,
His cloak is over everything we do,
And the whole town complains :—

A sombre scroll ;
An inner room.
A crystal bowl :
Waters of gloom.
Oh, the darkened house—
Into silence creep !
The world is cold.
All people weep.

UNKNOWN COUNTRY

HERE, in this other world, they come and go
With easy dream-like movements to and fro.
They stare through lovely eyes, yet do not seek
An answering gaze, or that a man should speak.
Had I a load of gold, and should I come
Bribing their friendship, and to buy a home,
They would stare harder and would slightly frown :
I am a stranger from the distant town.

Oh, with what patience I have tried to win
The favour of the hostess of the Inn !
Have I not offered toast on frothing toast
Looking toward the melancholy host ;
Praised the old wall-eyed mare to please the groom ;
Laughed to the laughing maid and fetched her broom ;
Stood in the background not to interfere
When the cool ancients frolicked at their beer ;
Talked only in my turn, and made no claim
For recognition or by voice or name,
Content to listen, and to watch the blue
Or grey of eyes, or what good hands can do ?

Sun-freckled lads, who at the dusk of day
Stroll through the village with a scent of hay
Clinging about you from the windy hill,
Why do you keep your secret from me still ?
You loiter at the corner of the street :
I in the distance silently entreat.

I know too well I'm city-soiled, but then
So are to-day ten million other men.
My heart is true : I've neither will nor charms
To lure away your maidens from your arms.
Trust me a little. Must I always stand
Lonely, a stranger from an unknown land ?

There is a riddle here. Though I'm more wise
Than you, I cannot read your simple eyes.
I find the meaning of their gentle look
More difficult than any learned book.
I pass : perhaps a moment you may chaff
My walk, and so dismiss me with a laugh.
I come : you all, most grave and most polite,
Stand silent first, then wish me calm Good-Night.
When I go back to town some one will say :
" I think that stranger must have gone away."
And " Surely ! " some one else will then reply.
Meanwhile, within the dark of London, I
Shall, with my forehead resting on my hand,
Not cease remembering your distant land ;
Endeavouring to reconstruct aright
How some treed hill has looked in evening light ;
Or be imagining the blue of skies
Now as in heaven, now as in your eyes ;
Or in my mind confusing looks or words
Of yours with dawnlight, or the song of birds :
Not able to resist, not even keep
Myself from hovering near you in my sleep :
You still as callous to my thought and me
As flowers to the purpose of bee.

WHILE WE SLEEP

THE earth takes up our bodies, every one,
And brings them slowly backward to the dark ;
Then on her shadowed side we droop and slumber,
Turned from the sun.

(Meanwhile He covers continents in light
One after other, so they stretch and wake,
Live their day through and droop again to slumber :
Day, night : day, night.)

The stars shine forth and disappear again,
Roaring about in space above our heads,
While we are folded to the earth in slumber
With dreaming brain.

We travel through the darkness : we are spun
Upward through rays of light into the morning ;
We waken with the earth : we glide from slumber
Toward the sun.

MAN CARRYING BALE

THE tough hand closes gently on the load ;
Out of the mind, a voice
Calls " Lift ! " and the arms, remembering well their work,
Lengthen and pause for help.
Then a slow ripple flows along the body,
While all the muscles call to one another :
" Lift ! " and the bulging bale
Floats like a butterfly in June.

So moved the earliest carrier of bales,
And the same watchful sun
Glowed through his body feeding it with light.
So will the last one move,
And halt, and dip his head, and lay his load
Down, and the muscles will relax and tremble. . . .
Earth, you designed your man
Beautiful both in labour, and repose.



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